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7 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**
8 **EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**
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10 SUSAN PHELPS,) 1:21-CV-00276-DAD-JLT
11)
12 Plaintiff,) SCHEDULING ORDER¹ (Fed. R. Civ. P. 16)
13)
14 v.)
15 FCA US, LLC, a Delaware Limited Liability) Discovery Deadlines:
16 Company,) Initial Disclosures: 5/24/2021
17) Non-Expert: 11/22/2021
18) Expert: 12/20/2021
19 Defendant.) Mid-Discovery Status Conference:
20) 6/28/2021 at 8:30 a.m.
21)
22)

23 Non-Dispositive and Dispositive Motion Deadlines:
24 Filing: 12/20/2021
25 Hearing: 1/18/2022

26 Settlement Conference:
27 3/7/2022 at 9:00 a.m.
28 510 19th Street, Bakersfield, CA

Pre-Trial Conference:
5/23/2022 at 1:30 p.m.
Courtroom 5

23 **I. Magistrate Judge Consent: Notice of Congested Docket and Court Policy of Trailing**

24 Due to the District Judges' heavy caseload, the adopted policy of the Fresno Division of the
25 Eastern District is to trail all civil cases. The parties are hereby notified that for a trial date set before a
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¹ Because of this Court's General Order 612 and because the Court finds the joint report adequately sets forth the information for the scheduling order, the scheduling conference is VACATED.

1 District Judge, the parties will trail indefinitely behind any higher priority criminal or older civil case
2 set on the same date until a courtroom becomes available. The trial date will not be reset.

3 The Magistrate Judges' availability is far more realistic and accommodating to parties than that
4 of the U.S. District Judges who carry the heaviest caseloads in the nation and who must prioritize
5 criminal and older civil cases over more recently filed civil cases. A United States Magistrate Judge
6 may conduct trials, including entry of final judgment, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(c), Federal Rule of
7 Civil Procedure 73, and Local Rule 305. Any appeal from a judgment entered by a United States
8 Magistrate Judge is taken directly to the United States Court of Appeal for the Ninth Circuit.

9 The Fresno Division of the Eastern District of California, whenever possible, is utilizing United
10 States Article III District Court Judges from throughout the nation as Visiting Judges. Pursuant to the
11 Local Rules, Appendix A, such reassignments will be random, and the parties will receive no advance
12 notice before their case is reassigned to an Article III District Court Judge from outside of the Eastern
13 District of California.

14 Therefore, the parties are directed to consider consenting to Magistrate Judge jurisdiction to
15 conduct all further proceedings, including trial. **Within 10 days** of the date of this order, counsel
16 **SHALL** file a consent/decline form (provided by the Court at the inception of this case) indicating
17 whether they will consent to the jurisdiction of the Magistrate Judge.

18 **II. Discovery Plan and Cut-Off Date**

19 The parties are ordered to exchange the initial disclosures required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(a)(1)
20 on or before **May 24, 2021**.

21 The parties are ordered to complete all discovery pertaining to non-experts on or before
22 **November 22, 2021** and all discovery pertaining to experts on or before **December 20, 2021**.

23 The parties are directed to disclose all expert witnesses², in writing, on or before **November 22,**
24 **2021**, and to disclose all rebuttal experts on or before **December 6, 2021**. The written designation of
25 retained and non-retained experts shall **be made pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. Rule 26(a)(2), (A), (B),**
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28 ² In the event an expert will offer opinions related to an independent medical or mental health
evaluation, the examination SHALL occur sufficiently in advance of the disclosure deadline so the expert's
report fully details the expert's opinions in this regard.

1 **and (C) and shall include all information required thereunder.** Failure to designate experts in
2 compliance with this order may result in the Court excluding the testimony or other evidence offered
3 through such experts that are not disclosed pursuant to this order.

4 The provisions of Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(b)(4) and (5) shall apply to all discovery relating to experts
5 and their opinions. Experts must be fully prepared to be examined on all subjects and opinions
6 included in the designation. Failure to comply will result in the imposition of sanctions, which may
7 include striking the expert designation and preclusion of expert testimony.

8 The provisions of Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(e) regarding a party's duty to timely supplement
9 disclosures and responses to discovery requests will be strictly enforced.

10 A mid-discovery status conference is scheduled for **June 28, 2021** at 8:30 a.m. before the
11 Honorable Jennifer L. Thurston, U.S. Magistrate Judge, located at 510 19th Street, Bakersfield,
12 California. Counsel SHALL file a joint mid-discovery status conference report one week before the
13 conference. Counsel also SHALL lodge the status report via e-mail to JLTorders@caed.uscourts.gov.
14 The joint statement SHALL outline the discovery counsel have completed and that which needs to be
15 completed as well as any impediments to completing the discovery within the deadlines set forth in this
16 order. **Counsel SHALL discuss settlement and certify that they have done so.** Counsel may appear
17 via teleconference by dialing (888) 557-8511 and entering Access Code 1652736, provided the
18 Magistrate Judge's Courtroom Deputy Clerk receives a written notice of the intent to appear
19 telephonically no later than five court days before the noticed hearing date.

20 **III. Pre-Trial Motion Schedule**

21 All non-dispositive pre-trial motions, including any discovery motions, shall be filed no later
22 than **December 20, 2021**³ and heard on or before **January 18, 2022**. Discovery motions are heard
23 before the Honorable Jennifer L. Thurston, United States Magistrate Judge at the United States
24 Courthouse in Bakersfield, California. For these hearings, counsel may appear via teleconference by
25 dialing (888) 557-8511 and entering Access Code 1652736, provided the Magistrate Judge's Courtroom
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28 ³ Non-dispositive motions related to non-expert discovery SHALL be filed within a reasonable time of
discovery of the dispute, but in no event later than 30 days after the expiration of the non-expert discovery
deadline.

1 Deputy Clerk receives a written notice of the intent to appear telephonically no later than five court
2 days before the noticed hearing date. All other non-dispositive hearings SHALL be set before Judge
3 Drozd.

4 **No motion to amend or stipulation to amend the case schedule will be entertained unless it**
5 **is filed at least one week before the first deadline the parties wish to extend.** Likewise, no written
6 discovery motions shall be filed without the prior approval of the assigned Magistrate Judge. A party
7 with a discovery dispute must first confer with the opposing party in a good faith effort to resolve by
8 agreement the issues in dispute. If that good faith effort is unsuccessful, the moving party promptly
9 shall seek a telephonic hearing with all involved parties and the Magistrate Judge. It shall be the
10 obligation of the moving party to arrange and originate the conference call to the court. To schedule
11 this telephonic hearing, the parties are ordered to contact the Courtroom Deputy Clerk, Susan Hall, at
12 (661) 326-6620 or via email at SHall@caed.uscourts.gov. **Counsel must comply with Local Rule 251**
13 **with respect to discovery disputes or the motion will be denied without prejudice and dropped**
14 **from the Court's calendar.**

15 All dispositive pre-trial motions shall be filed no later than **December 20, 2021** and heard no
16 later than **January 18, 2022**, in Courtroom 5 at 9:30 a.m. before the Honorable Dale A. Drozd, United
17 States District Court Judge. In scheduling such motions, **counsel shall comply with Fed. R. Civ. P. 56**
18 **and Local Rules 230 and 260.**

19 **IV. Motions for Summary Judgment or Summary Adjudication**

20 **At least 21 days before** filing a motion for summary judgment or motion for summary
21 adjudication, the parties are **ORDERED** to meet, in person or by telephone, to confer about the issues
22 to be raised in the motion.

23 The purpose of the meeting shall be to: 1) avoid filing motions for summary judgment where a
24 question of fact exists; 2) determine whether the respondent agrees that the motion has merit in whole
25 or in part; 3) discuss whether issues can be resolved without the necessity of briefing; 4) narrow the
26 issues for review by the court; 5) explore the possibility of settlement before the parties incur the
27 expense of briefing a motion; and 6) to develop a joint statement of undisputed facts.

28 The moving party **SHALL** initiate the meeting and **SHALL** provide a complete, proposed

1 statement of undisputed facts **at least five days before** the conference. The finalized joint statement of
2 undisputed facts **SHALL** include all facts that the parties agree, for purposes of the motion, may be
3 deemed true. In addition to the requirements of Local Rule 260, the moving party shall file the joint
4 statement of undisputed facts.

5 In the notice of motion the moving party **SHALL** certify that the parties have met and conferred
6 as ordered above, or set forth a statement of good cause for the failure to meet and confer. **Failure to**
7 **comply may result in the motion being stricken.**

8 **V. Pre-Trial Conference Date**

9 **May 23, 2022** at 1:30 p.m. in Courtroom 5 before Judge Drozd.

10 The parties are ordered to file a **Joint Pretrial Statement pursuant to Local Rule 281(a)(2).**
11 The parties are further directed to submit a digital copy of their pretrial statement in Word format,
12 directly to Judge Drozd's chambers, by email at DADorders@caed.uscourts.gov.

13 Counsels' attention is directed to **Rules 281 and 282 of the Local Rules** of Practice for the
14 Eastern District of California, as to the obligations of counsel in preparing for the pre-trial conference.
15 The Court will insist upon strict compliance with those rules. In addition to the matters set forth in the
16 Local Rules the Joint Pretrial Statement shall include a Joint Statement of the case to be used by the
17 Court to explain the nature of the case to the jury during voir dire.

18 **VI. Settlement Conference**

19 A settlement conference is scheduled for **March 7, 2022** at 9:00 a.m., located at 510 19th Street,
20 Bakersfield, California.

21 Unless otherwise permitted in advance by the Court, **the attorneys who will try the case**
22 **shall appear** at the Settlement Conference **with the parties** and the person or persons having **full**
23 **authority** to negotiate and settle the case **on any reasonable terms**⁴ discussed at the conference.
24 Consideration of settlement is a serious matter that requires preparation prior to the settlement
25 conference. Set forth below are the procedures the Court will employ, absent good cause, in
26 conducting the conference.

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28 ⁴ Insurance carriers, business organizations, and governmental bodies or agencies whose settlement agreements are subject to approval by legislative bodies, executive committees, boards of directors or the like may be represented by a person whose recommendations about settlement are relied upon by the ultimate decision makers.

1 **At least 21 days before** the settlement conference, Plaintiff **SHALL** submit to Defendant via
2 fax or e-mail, a written itemization of damages and a meaningful⁵ settlement demand which includes a
3 brief explanation of why such a settlement is appropriate. Thereafter, **no later than 14 days before** the
4 settlement conference, Defendant **SHALL** respond via fax or e-mail, with an acceptance of the offer or
5 with a meaningful counteroffer, which includes a brief explanation of why such a settlement is
6 appropriate. **The parties SHALL continue to exchange counteroffers until it is no longer**
7 **productive.**

8 If settlement is not achieved, each party **SHALL** attach copies of their settlement offers to
9 their Confidential Settlement Conference Statement, as described below. Copies of these documents
10 shall not be filed on the court docket.

11 **CONFIDENTIAL SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE STATEMENT**

12 **At least five court days before** the settlement conference, the parties shall submit, directly to
13 Judge Thurston's chambers by e-mail to JLTOrders@caed.uscourts.gov, a Confidential Settlement
14 Conference Statement. The statement **should not be filed** with the Clerk of the Court **nor served on**
15 **any other party**, although the parties may file a Notice of Lodging of Settlement Conference
16 Statement. Each statement shall be clearly marked "confidential" with the date and time of the
17 Settlement Conference indicated prominently thereon.

18 The Confidential Settlement Conference Statement shall include the following:

- 19 A. A brief statement of the facts of the case.
- 20 B. A brief statement of the claims and defenses, i.e., statutory or other grounds upon
21 which the claims are founded; a forthright evaluation of the parties' likelihood of
22 prevailing on the claims and defenses; and a description of the major issues in dispute.
- 23 C. A summary of the proceedings to date.
- 24 D. An estimate of the cost and time to be expended for further discovery, pretrial and
25 trial.

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27 ⁵ "Meaningful" means the offer is reasonably calculated to settle the case on terms acceptable to the offering
28 party. "Meaningful" does not include an offer which the offering party knows will not be acceptable to the other party.
If, however, the offering party is only willing to offer a settlement which it knows the other party will not accept, this
should trigger a recognition the case is not in a settlement posture and the parties should confer about continuing the
settlement conference via stipulation.

- 1 E. The relief sought.
- 2 F. The party's position on settlement, including present demands and offers and a history
- 3 of past settlement discussions, offers and demands.

4 **VII. Request for Bifurcation, Appointment of Special Master, or other Techniques to Shorten**

5 **Trial**

6 Not applicable at this time.

7 **VIII. Related Matters Pending**

8 There are no pending related matters.

9 **IX. Compliance with Federal Procedure**

10 All counsel are expected to familiarize themselves with the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure

11 and the Local Rules of Practice of the Eastern District of California, and to keep abreast of any

12 amendments thereto. The Court must insist upon compliance with these Rules if it is to efficiently

13 handle its increasing case load and sanctions will be imposed for failure to follow both the Federal

14 Rules of Civil Procedure and the Local Rules of Practice for the Eastern District of California.

15 **X. Effect of this Order**

16 The foregoing order represents the best estimate of the court and counsel as to the agenda most

17 suitable to dispose of this case. The trial date reserved is specifically reserved for this case. If the

18 parties determine at any time that the schedule outlined in this order cannot be met, counsel are ordered

19 to notify the court immediately of that fact so that adjustments may be made, either by stipulation or by

20 subsequent status conference.

21 **The dates set in this order are firm and will not be modified absent a showing of good**

22 **cause even if the request to modify is made by stipulation. Stipulations extending the deadlines**

23 **contained herein will not be considered unless they are accompanied by affidavits or declarations,**

24 **and where appropriate attached exhibits, which establish good cause for granting the relief**

25 **requested.**

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Failure to comply with this order may result in the imposition of sanctions.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: May 13, 2021

/s/ Jennifer L. Thurston
CHIEF UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE